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THE ROSARY

A Short Treatise
edited

by the Society of
St. John the Evangelist
Cambridge
U.S.A.

Our Father.

Glory be.

Ten
Hail Marys

Our Father.

Glory be.

Ten
Hail Marys

Our
Father.

IHS

Glory be.

3 Hail Marys

Our Father.

Apostles  Creed.

A SHORT TREATISE ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Our Lord says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden” (St. Matt. xi. 28). We want to come to him in prayer. The Rosary is a method of prayer which has helped countless thousands of people to come to Jesus Christ. It may be said to be specially helpful to those whom our Lord specially invites—those “who labour and are heavy laden”—for it does not make a large demand upon the intellect, and yet it does furnish aid in lifting up the mind from earthly cares to heavenly truths.

We may consider three ways in which the use of the Rosary helps those who are heavy laden to come to Jesus:

1. It is a prayer which **provides our minds with thoughts of Jesus.**

2. It **provides us with easy words**, by means of which we may lift up our hearts to Jesus.

3. It enables us to pray in company with the friends of Jesus.

Let us think about each of these three points in turn:

1. The use of the Rosary **provides our minds with thoughts of Jesus.**

The words which we recite when we say the Rosary are grouped round five important scenes from the Gospel story, generally spoken of as “Mysteries”.

(For a list of these Mysteries, see below.)

In the entire Rosary there are really fifteen of these Mysteries, but it is usual to say only a third of the

entire Rosary at one time—meditating briefly on either the Five Joyful Mysteries or the Five Sorrowful Mysteries or the Five Glorious Mysteries, while we recite the familiar words of vocal prayer, described below.

These Mysteries exactly furnish something which is greatly needed in coming to our Lord in prayer. Those who are burdened need something better in their prayer than the task of relating their troubles and describing their needs. It is better that their minds should be lifted up to heavenly realities. God desires that we should lift up our hearts to him in prayer rather than that we should give him an accurate account of our condition. “Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.” Our aim and effort in prayer should be to fix our minds no longer upon our own cares, but rather to lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

It is exactly in this way that the Mysteries of the Rosary daily serve to lift up to Jesus Christ the minds and hearts of thousands who labour and are heavy laden on earth.

2. The Rosary helps us in prayer because it supplies us with easy words with which to come to the Throne of Grace, where Jesus is.

Many are discouraged and hindered from prayer because of the difficulty of finding suitable words with which to pray. They desire to pray, but they cannot invent an adequate expression of their desire. Prayers provided in books often seem inappropriate or unreal, and yet, without some definite vehicle of sustained prayer, they cannot lift up their hearts to God at all.

Besides the difficulty of expressing our needs, we often do not know exactly what our needs are. This

is especially the case when we are praying for others or when we are burdened with anxiety, or when we want to lift up to God something which closely touches the dim world of the affections. In this kind of difficulty the Rosary may be a great help. The words which we use in reciting the Rosary are easy, appropriate, and adaptable. Their recitation occupies about ten minutes. We are not obliged to follow the meaning of each sentence with our minds: the words should rather be thought of as forming a single sustained appeal or aspiration. And yet the words are in themselves good and suitable, and they will be found to have such elasticity of significance that they will prove to be the right prayer for all kinds of people in all kinds of need.

Think what these words are, and you will see how good they are:

(a) The “**Our Father**”, the very prayer which our Lord himself has taught us.

(b) The “**Hail Mary**”, in which we repeat the great Salutation from the Gospel (St. Luke i. 28 and 42), and in which we ask that our prayer may be lifted up to heaven, and there linked with the prayers of our Lord’s holy Mother.

(c) The “**Glory be**”, in which we ascribe all praise and glory to God the Holy Trinity.

3. The Rosary helps those who are heavy laden to come to Jesus in prayer, because it provides cheering companionship in the labour of prayer.

Companionship in prayer gives support and encouragement to those who desire to come to our Lord, but who find prayer to be a difficult and laborious task, and who are burdened with the consciousness that their prayers are feeble and imperfect. In this

experience of our need of support in the labour of prayer, help may be found in such a method as the Rosary, because in various ways it enables us to realize the fellowship which is ours in the Communion of Saints. When we say the Rosary we avail ourselves of the assistance of a multitude of God's people, in heaven and on earth, and we ourselves help to bear the burden of others by making our own small contribution to the great stream of prayer which rises continually to the Heart of God.

The Rosary provides fellowship in prayer:

(a) Because it is well adapted for public recitation in which all can take part.

(b) Because when we say the Rosary, we join with thousands of other Christians who are using the same thoughts and the same words in their prayer.

(c) Because the Rosary links our prayer with a multitude of God's saints who have gone before us, who learned to come to Jesus in prayer by saying the Rosary when they were on earth.

(d) Because, in saying the Rosary, we lift up our hearts to God in fellowship with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven.

In the first half of the "Hail Mary" we use the Salutation which was first spoken by the Archangel Gabriel when sent from God to Mary, and in the second half we go on again and again to claim a place for our own need in the prayer of our Lord's blessed Mother.

Surely such a prayer as this may provide for those who are heavy laden a good way of coming to Jesus.

A prayer so much used and so well loved and so long tested seems as if it must have been inspired by him who has put the spirit of his Son into the hearts of his children (Gal. iv. 6).

Surely those who join in this great Catholic prayer are “praying in the Holy Ghost” (St. Jude 20).

Surely in this prayer we have one of the ways in which we may yield ourselves to him who is our Great High Priest, in whom we may “come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. iv. 16).

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Annunciation. *Luke i.* 26–38.
2. The Visitation. *Luke i.* 39–56.
3. The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Luke ii.* 1–7.
4. The Presentation in the Temple. *Luke ii.* 22–40.
5. The Finding in the Temple. *Luke ii.* 41–52.

These are generally used on Mondays and Thursdays, and on Sundays in the Christmas Season.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Agony in the Garden. *Luke xxii.* 39–47.
2. The Scourging. *Mark xv.* 7–10.
3. The Crowning with Thorns. *Matt.* xxvii. 27–31; *John xix.* 2–6.
4. The Carrying of the Cross. *John xix.* 14–17; *Luke xxiii.* 24–33.
5. The Crucifixion. *Luke xxiii.* 33–50; *John xix.* 17–37.

These are generally used on Tuesdays and Fridays, and on Sundays in Lent and Passontide.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Resurrection. *Matt. xxviii. 1-10; John xx.*
- 1-18.
2. The Ascension. *Acts. i. 9-11; Luke xxiv. 50-53.*
3. The Coming of the Holy Ghost. *Acts ii. 1-5.*
4. The Assumption of our Lady. *Rev. xii. 1.*
5. The Coronation of our Lady. *Rev. iii. 21; xix.*
- 6-10.

These are generally used on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on Sundays in the Easter Season, and on ordinary Sundays.

NOTE ON THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

Some people have scruples about using the Fourth or the Fifth of the Glorious Mysteries because these do not seem to be recorded in the Gospel narrative.

Let such persons be content, for a time, to substitute for the Fourth Glorious Mystery a brief consideration of the death in Christ of those who have fought a good fight, who have finished their course, who have kept the faith (2 Tim. iv. 7); and, for the Fifth Glorious Mystery, let them reflect upon those saints who, having completed their time of trial, receive at last the Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (St. James i. 12).

After doing this for a time, they will probably find that they can think of the Blessed Virgin in connection with these two Mysteries quite naturally and sincerely.

HOW TO RECITE THE ROSARY

It is usual to begin by saying:

The Apostles' Creed,
One "Our Father",
Three "Hail Marys",
One "Glory be to the Father".

Then proceed to the Mysteries in the following manner.
After a brief recollection of each Mystery recite:

One "Our Father",
Ten "Hail Marys",
One "Glory be".

If anyone will examine the arrangement of beads in the most common form of Rosary, he will easily discover how the beads correspond with the prayers described above, and will be able to understand how the beads are useful in the recitation of those prayers.

The words of the "Our Father" are known to every Christian.

The words of the "Hail Mary" are:

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

The words of the "Glory be" are:

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

"As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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